

Victorious: It's Time to Slay Your Dragons Series

Are You Flourishing?

What I love most about the beginning of a new year is the opportunity to start over or try again. I'm not big on resolutions as they are often so short-lived, but I do usually set a few goals for the year. One of my goals is to do better at providing a weekly blog that will encourage us to live the life God has called us to live. Some argue that people don't read blogs anymore. I don't think that's true. I believe if someone is encouraged by what they read, they will return to read more and will often share it with others.

I awoke early this morning and started my day with a cup of coffee and some prayer. I found myself in Psalm 52, and when I got to verse 8 all of my CGWM sisters came to mind. **Today is the last day to save with early registration for The Flourish Conference!**

I love that the purpose of our annual conference is to equip and empower women to flourish in God's Kingdom. I would love to see every woman (and man, actually) in the Churches of God General Conference flourishing whether they attend our conference or not.

So I wonder this morning, are you flourishing? Are the people in your house flourishing? Is your church family flourishing? What does that even look like anyway? Will you join me on a short treasure hunt in the Word?

We start our treasure hunt in Psalm 52:8.

"I am like an olive tree..."

I am instantly transported back in time to Camp Sonrise Mountain last April as Kelly DeVincent invited the women of the Allegheny Region in for a weekend retreat entitled "Grafted In" for which I was the keynote speaker. I learned more about olive trees and the process of grafting than I could have imagined! All that information begins floating around in my head as I take notice of the little note in my Bible by the word olive tree.

A treasure hunt, by the way, is when I start with a verse or a passage and follow all the links to delve deeper into the Word and see what the Holy Spirit wants to teach me.

So, I take the first leap to the note in my Bible about **olive tree**. It says that trees were not planted in the temple area, but if one were, it would, because of its long life, spend many years in God's presence. Olive trees can live for thousands of years! I have seen pictures of an olive tree growing in the Garden of Gethsemane today that Jesus would have walked by!

Treasure #1 If you want to flourish, you must live daily in God's presence.

There are also a couple of references

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That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers.

Psalm 1:3



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Created to Flourish

Precious sisters in Christ, you were created to flourish! Ephesians 2:10 tells us that we are God's workmanship—translated masterpiece in some versions. Have you ever thought of yourself as a masterpiece?

Here's the thing. We **are** God's workmanship, and in Christ, we are complete (holy, perfect, lacking in nothing), but on this side of Heaven, we are still a work in progress. As we explore the topic of being a victorious Christian woman this year, it is important to know that God is not finished with His masterpiece! He has promised us, though, that He *will* finish in His perfect time (Philippians 1:6).

It is also important to note that we have all been created for a purpose. A victorious woman understands that she has purpose, and that God has a magnificent plan for her life. God's plans are always good, but we must choose to walk in His plans rather than our own. Many Christians wander through life aimlessly because they do not understand their purpose or they want to work out their own plans rather than follow God's plans for them.

While our purpose and plans will be specific to our own unique situation, all of us must understand a few basics if we want to flourish as God intends. One of my favorite passages to teach from is John 15. The whole chapter is packed with treasures to live by, though we only have space to explore a few thoughts today. First, we have been created to bear fruit (John 15:8). Interestingly, to flourish means to bear fruit profusely! Just as God designed all living creatures to be fruitful and multiply, we are made

to reproduce. Yes, that can mean having babies, but here it is more like spiritual babies. We are disciples created in Christ to make disciples. Part of God's plan for us, then, is to pass on what we are learning so others can grow too.

If you think about a grapevine or an olive tree or any fruit-bearing plant really, what is necessary for fruitfulness is simple (not necessarily easy!): good soil. water and sunlight. Under these conditions, the grapevine will grow and produce fruit. It happens naturally as a result of the growth process. It is important to note, however, that the gardener is always busy to create the right environment for growth. It is the gardener's job to prepare the soil and ensure proper light, water and pruning. A grapevine does not strive to produce fruit, though. It sends down its roots deep into the soil to obtain the nutrients it needs to grow. It does what it was created



to do. Unlike us, it doesn't have free will! We get to choose whether or not we will cooperate with God. To truly flourish (produce fruit profusely) we must be intentional. While it is a natural process, it will not just happen without our willingness. We must learn to abide in the Vine. We must be willing to share with others what we are learning.

There is great joy in sharing in God's work in the lives of others, precious sisters. Every one of us has a story to tell that will help others to grow. Will you be a part of someone else's masterpiece?



A Woman of Purpose

A few years ago Rick Warren wrote a best-selling book called **A Purpose-Driven Life**. I'm sure it's still a top seller because one of the questions most of us will ask at some point in our lives is "Why am I here?" Most of us long to know our purpose, but few truly discover it. A purpose-driven life doesn't happen by accident but by intentionally seeking the Lord with a

desire to live for Him.

In John 15:16, Jesus declares, "You did not choose me, but I chose you..." The first step in understanding your purpose is to know that you are a woman chosen by God. You are His. Your purpose has been decided by Him, and He wants to do everything to help you live out the

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A Woman of Purpose

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purpose for which he designed you. If you are unsure of your purpose, ask the Lord to make it clear to you, and understand that He is working it out.

Jesus added that He "appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit." All of us have been called to bear fruit. So our purpose is directly connected to how God wants to use us to bear fruit in the particular context where He has placed us. That means in our homes, in our churches, in our community, in our nation, and beyond. That means whatever we are doing and wherever we are doing it, God intends for us to bear fruit. We follow Jesus' example in this. Whenever He went and whomever He was with, He was always doing what the Father called Him to do. Every circumstance in His life was an opportunity to show the Father's heart to someone.

Sweet sisters, we do not just imi-

tate Jesus in this regard. He has given us the precious gift of His Holy Spirit to guide our steps and enable us to show the Father's love to the people He has put in our sphere of influence.

Jesus' purpose was to give His life as a sacrifice for all of our sins. No one else could have completed His assignment. For Him to accomplish His purpose, He had to leave Heaven, come to Earth as a little baby, grow up in Mary and Joseph's family, be baptized, be filled with the Spirit, be tempted, and just live life from day to day. All of His life culminated in three years of ministry leading up to those precious words on the Cross, "It is finished."

Every part of Jesus' life was centered on His purpose at the Cross. He lived every day to do the Father's will. And though we are not Jesus nor is our purpose as significant as His, we are chosen. We are called. In every season of every day, the Lord would have us live for His glory. Like Jesus, no one else can accomplish your purpose for you.

A woman of purpose

- knows she is chosen
- knows she is called
- knows that God has a wonderful plan for her and wants to live it out
- desires to please the Lord in all she does trusts the Lord to lead her step by step.

Lord, we are your daughters, chosen and called for a purpose. We desire to glorify you in all that we are and all that we do. Enable us by Your Spirit to live each day with purpose and in your plan. Help us



to seek Your face and draw near to You that we might be everything you created us to be. Thank You, Lord, for your great love! Thank You for using us to further your Kingdom. May we bear much fruit as we live daily for You. Amen.



The Flourish Conference is quickly approaching and we are super excited for what God has planned. Georgina Verzal, our keynote speaker, has a weekly podcast called Midweek Momentum. In this episode she talks about living out bold faith.

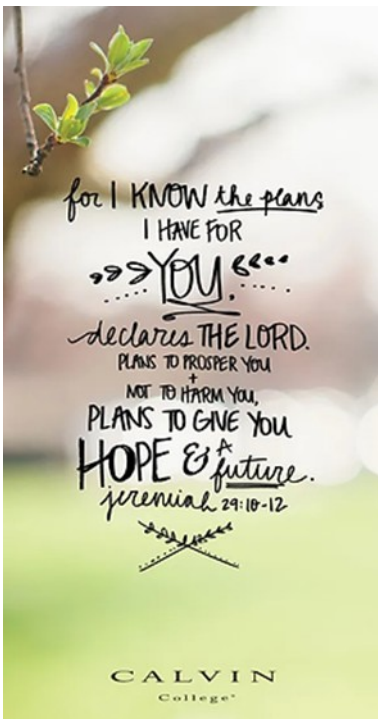
Do you have a bold fearless faith that is willing to jump, a faith that trusts that God is who He says He is and promises to do what He says He will! I don't know about you but I want a faith like that!!

Take a listen.

<https://youtu.be/kuhBLiYN-pA?si=Xuud5ypJhocdWaZf>

If you are not registered yet follow this link to register

<https://www.theflourishconference.org>

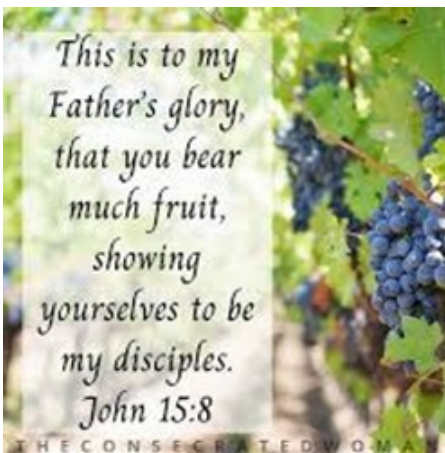


Who Do You Think You Are?

The Bible teaches us that how we think about ourselves directly impacts who we are or will become. Every well-trained salesperson is taught this principle. Dr. Norman Vincent Peale wrote a book about this called *The Power of Positive Thinking*. Dr. Caroline Leaf, a Christian neuroscientist, speaks about scientific evidence for this in her podcasts and books ([link below to a podcast on identity](#)).

Aside from all that, I am a living testimony of this truth. I don't have room here for the whole story, except to say that I was controlled by a victim mindset until the Lord taught me to use Philippians 4:8 as a standard to hold every thought. As I learned to take every thought captive, my super negative outlook about everything, especially myself, was transformed. When I began to understand who I am in God's eyes and chose to live by faith, believing God's Word rather than how I felt about myself, how I felt about myself began to change.

When I thought about everything through a victim mindset, every choice I made reflected that. The reason for my thinking this way didn't have to impact the rest of my



life. I couldn't change my past, but with God's help, I could learn to think His way about everything, especially myself.

Why is how I view myself important? The enemy constantly accuses us and attacks how we view the world, including our self-esteem. If I do not know who I am—who God says I am—then I will fall victim to his accusations. If I think of myself as a loser, I will lose. Ask any professional athlete if this is true!

If God says I am fearfully and wonderfully made, I choose to believe it. Sounds easy. It isn't. It is not easy to change a mindset. I had to ask God every day to help me believe. I had to practice living with this mindset by refusing to beat myself up for every failure and flaw. Over many months and with the Holy Spirit's help, I overcame that mindset and exchanged it for God's—I am fearfully and wonderfully made. I am His treasure. I am loved.

That is another important identity piece. If you do not believe that you are loved, then you cannot give or receive love. Instead, you are always in a state of neediness looking for someone to affirm you but never being able to receive that affirmation. I believed God loved you and God loved the world, but I couldn't believe He loved me because I felt so unlovable, damaged because of my history and my accepting the lies of the deceiver as truth for so long. God led me through the same process with this struggle. His Word tells me I am loved, so I choose to believe I am loved. I repeated verses every day that helped me to change my thinking and over time my mindset began to change. With the help of the Holy Spirit and God showing me in very tangible ways how much He loves me, I found victory. Knowing I am loved was a game-changer!

My husband gifted me with a beautiful throw for Christmas in 2023 that expresses well how God sees His children. I turned those verses into a bookmark to hand out wherever I go because without a clear and Biblical understanding of who we are in Christ, we will never be able to flourish in His Kingdom or live our God-designed purpose and plans. (Email me at cgwmdirector@gmail.com if you want a printable version.) Here's the list:

- ◆ **I am God's child.** John 1:12
- ◆ **I am loved.** Jeremiah 31:3
- ◆ **I am forgiven.** Psalm 103:12
- ◆ **I am free.** John 8:36
- ◆ **I am valuable.** 1 Cor 6:19-20
- ◆ **I am unique.** Psalm 139:13
- ◆ **I am lovely.** Daniel 12:3
- ◆ **I am special.** Ephesians 2:19
- ◆ **I am enough.** 2 Corinthians 12:9
- ◆ **I am chosen.** John 15:16; Col 3:12
- ◆ **I am special.** Ephesians 2:10
- ◆ **I am amazing.** Psalm 139:14
- ◆ **I am victorious.** Romans 8:37
- ◆ **I am a new creation.** 2 Cor 5:17
- ◆ **I am never alone.** Hebrews 13:5

I have to confess that when God started teaching me these things, I was so oppressed by the enemy that I didn't believe even one of these truths. Today, I am filled with gratitude that

Who Do You Think You Are

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God has worked many of these truths about how He sees me into my image of myself. I am no longer struggling to believe what God says. By His grace and the Holy Spirit's help, I am a new person with a new mindset. I am confident that God will complete the work He has begun in me (Phil 1:6), and I am free to love and encourage others instead of constantly needing someone to hold me up.

As you consider this list—only a starting point—praise God for any areas where you already walk in that mindset. Then ask the Holy Spirit where to start and how to move forward. God is a patient and loving teacher! He knows we need Him, and He wants to help us to be victorious. He wants us to see ourselves as He sees us. He knows we are full of flaws, but His grace is sufficient in all these things.

Lord God, thank You for Your grace and Your mercy! Thank You for loving us and drawing us to Yourself. Thank You for Your faithfulness. Teach us to walk in Your ways and to think according to Your thoughts. Renew our minds until they agree with Yours. We love you, Lord! We are grateful to be your daughters.

Dr. Caroline Leaf, S1 E9: The Key to Finding Your Identity & Purpose
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KzooW-qBWg>



From the Director's Desk

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to other verses next to **olive tree** in the verse, so that is where we are going next. First, we go to Psalm 1:3 where we learn that a tree planted by rivers of water is fruitful and healthy.

The beginning of Psalm 1 gives us clues about how to be a fruitful tree. It says this person doesn't hang out with the wrong people. Instead, this person delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night.

Treasure #2 If you want to flourish, you must spend time daily in God's Word and then meditate on what you read there.

The word **meditate** takes me to a note that says to meditate is from the Hebrew word *hagah* (Strong's #1897) meaning to ponder or think about, to softly repeat the words of Scripture. This is a critical component of the process. To flourish, we must go further than simply reading God's Word. We must spend time thinking about it. I have found that speaking verses out loud can help me to internalize the Scripture as I learn to live what it says.

There are a couple of references next to the word **trust**, so we'll go there next. Both Psalm 6:4 and Psalm 13:5 remind us of God's unfailing love. A flourishing woman of God knows with every fiber of her being that she is loved. It is pretty easy to understand that truth with your head, but often we struggle with a heart that struggles to believe it!

It is ok to ask God to help you understand more fully how much He loves you. You are loved by God more deeply than you will ever know whether you feel it or not. Begin by



accepting the truth of God simply because He said it. Then ask Him to help you to believe it. He will.

Knowing that God loves you is critical to being able to trust Him, and that leads us back to where we started in Psalm 52. I trust in His unfailing love.

Treasure #3 If you want to flourish, you must trust in God's unfailing love.

Precious sisters in Christ, my prayer for you in 2025 is that you will indeed flourish in God's Kingdom. You are loved. God has wonderful plans for you this year! I hope that includes your joining us at the Flourish Conference.

Be sure your pastor's wife (or female pastor) knows that she can receive a complementary ticket, but will want to register early because these free tickets are first come, first served until they're gone. A print-friendly version of the brochure is available if you want to print some to share with friends who aren't on our mailing list.

Advancing the Kingdom together,



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If you or your women's group have not been a part of Thank Offering in the past and would like to, all you need to do is get a container and start thanking God for the many blessings he gives you each day. Look for our reminders to send in your offerings in April. We are better together! Thank Offering barrels may be obtained by contacting Kathy Foor or ordering online at [Berlin Packaging](#).

Visit our Website

<https://www.cggcwomen.org/>

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THE FLOURISH CONFERENCE

SAVE THE DATE

VICTORIOUS!

IT'S TIME TO SLAY YOUR DRAGONS

MARCH 7-9, 2025

Featured Speaker



Georgina Verzal

Register at
cggcwomen.org or scan
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NEW

Location: Grand Point Church—2230 Grand Point Road, Chambersburg, PA 17202